

Just
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Governor's Commission on Civil Disorders "ignored vital evidence presented to it in its recommendation that a civilian police review board be established in Newark," John J. Heffernan, President of the New Jersey State Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, charged today.

Heffernan, a Maplewood Detective and spokesman for the 16,000-member organization, said the Commission "threw a pair of loaded dice at Newark police by accepting as gospel every aspersion against police and ignoring completely evidence supporting the police."

He said that records were presented to the Commission investigators showing that from 1960 through 1967, including the riot period, only 67 complaints of alleged excessive use of force by police were received. During the same period, the records showed, 1,090 police were assaulted in the performance of their duties, with 598 of these assaults resulting in injury or death for policemen.

"But nowhere in the Commission's biased report will you find mention of these assaults on police while performing their sworn duty," Heffernan asserted.

Heffernan also was bitterly critical of Oliver Lofton, Newark attorney who heads the Newark Legal Services Project and who also served as a member of the Governor's Commission.

The State P.B.A. President said that as a result of the riots, five complaints of alleged police brutality were filed, three of them by Lofton on behalf of clients. Heffernan said that to date Lofton has failed to substantiate his charges or permitted police to question witnesses to the alleged incidents.

Heffernan added, "This is the kind of harrassment that police face in trying to uphold law and order. Baseless charges are made, rarely substantiated and yet the Commission permits itself to be a party to further harrassment of police by recommending a police review board in Newark.

"What the Commission apparently has forgotten is that it was not the Newark police who rioted. It was not the Newark police who looted. It was not the Newark police who sniped from the rooftops and hurled bottles and rocks and Molotov cocktails.

"These are facts well-known to the public if not the Commission. Any effort to hamstring law enforcement efforts of Newark police by the creation of a civilian police review board will be fought with every weapon at the command of the State PBA. We shall not stand idly by while enemies of law and order attempt to further shackle law enforcement officers in Newark or anywhere in the State."

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